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Environment and sustainable development: further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Letter dated 20 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the final report of the Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the international meeting to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Apia, Samoa, from 4 to 8 August 2003 (see annex). On behalf of the participating Pacific island countries and at their request, we request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 96 (d) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Tuiloma Neroni **Slade**
Ambassador/Permanent Representative

* A/58/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 22 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Samoa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the Pacific Regional Meeting for the Review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Hotel Kitano Tusitala, Apia, Samoa 4 – 8 August 2003

1. The Pacific Regional Meeting for the Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) was held in Apia, Samoa 4-8 August 2003. The meeting was officially opened by His Excellency the Honourable Tagaloa Tuala Sale Tagaloa, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Samoa. It was organized by the Small Island Developing States Unit of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and hosted by the Government of Samoa, with generous support from the Government of New Zealand. The meeting was assisted by the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) and by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

2. The following Pacific Island Countries were represented: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu.

3. The following observer countries were represented: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, and New Zealand. The Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States was also present during the meeting.

4. The following international, regional and national organizations were represented: UN DESA, the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNet), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNDP, World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, the South Pacific Regional Environment Program, the South Pacific Tourism Organization, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, University of the South Pacific, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Concerns Resource Center and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era - DAWN.

5. The delegates acknowledged the support to be forthcoming from UNDP and the Commonwealth Secretariat for completion of the National Assessment Reports, and also acknowledge the offers of support presented by international and regional organizations at the meeting. In particular, the offer by Australia to support the Pacific Island Countries in their preparations for and participation in the International Meeting was welcomed.

6. The Meeting agreed that full support from CROP organizations and others would be needed to ensure full and effective participation in the BPoA+10 Review and the International Meeting to be held in Mauritius in 2004. The delegates called on the international community to provide the necessary financial resources that would enable the full implementation of the BPOA.

7. The delegates agreed that representation at the highest level was desirable in Mauritius and asked that this report be submitted to the 2003 Forum Meeting in Auckland 15 to 16 August, for their consideration.

8. The delegates reaffirmed the continued validity of the BPOA as the blueprint for sustainable development in the region and for SIDS in general. They expressed continued support to the principles expressed in the Declaration of Barbados. They expressed the need to build on Pacific traditions and to strengthen the use of culture and history in the development of strategic planning processes for sustainable development. It was also

recognized that there was a need to strengthen self-reliance and build on internal strengths and to commit domestic resources to strengthen the capacity for national implementation of the BPOA.

9. The delegates discussed the principles relating to the special case of SIDS, and noted that the vulnerabilities of SIDS have increased over the last decade. The resilience of SIDS is not improving. While the world community has acknowledged time and again the special case of SIDS, the full application of that principle remains as pertinent today for the social, economic and environmental development of SIDS. In an ever-globalizing world the situation of SIDS continues to be one of exposure and growing vulnerability with an increasing inability to respond. There are many disadvantages that derive from small size, which are magnified by the fact that many island States are not only small but are themselves made up of a number of small islands. Those disadvantages include a narrow range of resources, which forces undue specialization; excessive dependence on international trade and hence vulnerability to global developments; high population density, which increases the pressure on already limited resources; overuse of resources and premature depletion; relatively small watersheds and threatened supplies of fresh water; costly public administration and infrastructure, including transportation and communication; and limited institutional capacities and domestic markets, which are too small to provide significant scale economies, while their limited export volumes, sometimes from remote locations, lead to high freight costs and reduced competitiveness. Small islands tend to have high degrees of endemism and levels of biodiversity, but the relatively small numbers of the various species impose high risks of extinction and create a need for protection. The protection and promotion of traditional knowledge in the Pacific will be important for the building of resilience to these vulnerabilities.

10. In reviewing the progress in the implementation of the BPOA over the past decade countries recognized the overall weak level of implementation at the international level. It was recognized that there are causes beyond the direct control of Pacific SIDS that impeded the full and effective implementation of the BPOA. These include:

1. Overall decline in overseas development assistance
2. Decline in commodity prices
3. Loss of preferential trade arrangements
4. Global pressure to reduce the size of the public sector
5. Increase in the cost of imported fossil fuels
6. Instigation of some donor driven projects that may be inconsistent with BPOA

11. At the same time it was also acknowledged that the Pacific SIDS had implemented many aspects of the BPOA. Nonetheless, it was recognized that there was a need for greater awareness raising on and ownership of the BPOA, in particular at the national and regional level, and a need for greater political commitment to implementation at the national level.

12. In this regard, it was also noted that in terms of national implementation of sustainable development, many SIDS have achieved progress in their implementation of the main UNCED-related conventions. This implementation has been complementary to the BPOA. It is important for SIDS to maximize their access to available resources under the UN FCCC, CBD and UN CCD, and their protocols. In particular there has been a lack of presentation of proposals for funding under the UN CCD. Noting the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UN CCD, Pacific SIDS welcomed the opportunity to access GEF financial and technical resources to develop and implement projects to address land degradation, while calling for additional resources to enable them to complete their national action programmes. It was also noted that there continues to be a lack of funding for adaptation projects under the UN FCCC. The international community should provide further assistance to SIDS, through the GEF – the global mechanism of these conventions, and through other innovative financial schemes to enable SIDS to comply with these conventions.

13. There is a need for improved outreach and information sharing on the access to and availability of funding sources for sustainable development related activities. It was recommended that SIDS seek an innovative financial mechanism to support activities under the BPOA. There is also a need to secure greater flexibility in the procedures of the GEF to take into account the special circumstances and challenges of SIDS, especially in relation to co-financing and incremental costs. It was noted that the agreements reached in the Monterrey

Consensus could form a useful basis for work on financing for development of SIDS. It was recommended that UN DESA be requested to prepare a comprehensive background document on the availability of financial resources in support of the BPOA, possibly as a matrix document relating to available international sources of funding for sustainable development.

14. Pacific SIDS were unable to fully complete the national consultative process and the development of national assessment reports required for the BPOA+10 process, mainly due to time and funding constraints and procedures. The meeting was unable to complete a regional assessment report because the final draft national assessment reports. Nevertheless, the delegates were able to share information from their national experience from some national consultations and from reports that have been completed for the WSSD and required under other international conventions and treaties related to sustainable development.

15. Given that the National Assessment Reports have not been completed, the meeting reaffirmed the need for completing the national consultations as soon as possible. It was also agreed that the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group, in line with its existing mandate, would coordinate the development of a draft Pacific regional position on the basis of those National Assessment Reports, as well as on a Regional Synopsis currently being developed by the CROP organizations. National Assessment Reports should be finalized by the end of October 2003, in order to enable the draft Pacific regional position to be completed and submitted by the end of November 2003. It should be noted that the national and regional reports will be considered to be in draft form, to allow Governments and regions to further refine, elaborate and develop their inputs in time for the International Meeting in Mauritius.

16. The meeting decided that the structure of the draft Pacific regional position, as contained in the annex to this report, would include separate reporting on all the chapters of the BPOA, including new and emerging issues such as security in all its aspects. The draft Pacific regional position will be a crucial element for the Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting in the Bahamas in January 2004, as it will central to the formulation of an AOSIS negotiating position.

17. Delegates agreed that the vision of the draft Pacific regional position should be similar to that presented in the regional submission for the WSSD "Achieving measurable sustainable development in the Pacific region towards improving the quality of life for all" to ensure a people, ocean and islands focus for sustainable development in the Pacific region. The objectives of the draft Pacific regional position would be to:

- Ensure the sustainable development priorities of the Pacific region are fully acknowledged and integrated in the BPOA+10 outcomes;
- Secure and strengthen political support from the international community for programmes and initiatives that are essential to sustainable development of this region's people, their environment and natural resources;
- Promote new and existing partnerships beneficial to sustainable development of the region;
- Enhance the efficiency of use of existing resources and secure and mobilise resources to build capacity for sustainable development.
- Set targets by which to measure implementation as well as to provide input to other reporting requirements, including the integration of those from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

18. The meeting reiterated the need to pursue the formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies by the target date of 2005, as agreed in the JPOI, integrating actions across the three pillars of economic development, social development, and environment protection, and to include targets and regular monitoring and evaluation procedures.

19. The delegates recognized the value that a simple monitoring process on annual basis would have, especially in 2004 in time for the CSD discussion on SIDS. Performance indicators and measures would also provide a tool to report on the MDGs. It was recommended that ways and means of easing the reporting burden on SIDS be

considered and that CROP organizations and the UN system be requested to support the development of appropriate data bases. Coordination on SIDS issues within the UN Secretariat as well as among the UN agencies needs to be streamlined for improving efficiency in the delivery of services to the SIDS.

20. Noting the burden of reporting for SIDS on a variety of multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), delegates called for simplified reporting procedures and harmonization of reporting requirements to the MEAs.

21. It was recognized that the Pacific Umbrella Type II WSSD Initiatives align with the Chapters of the BPOA. These will continue to be used as platforms to secure new resources to assist with the implementation of the BPOA. In terms of reporting on activities under the Type II Initiatives, this could serve as an important additional source of information on sustainable development activities in the region. In order to optimize access to non-traditional donors delegates expressed strong support for the PIF Missions Road Map "In pursuit of Implementation of the JPOI for Sustainable Development in the Pacific".

22. An initial discussion was held on major sustainable development issues for the region. These issues included those identified at the BPoA+5 Review by the UNGA in 1999 (A/S-22/9/Rev1) as well as at the 4th AOSIS Summit held during the WSSD in Johannesburg and in chapter 7 of the JPOI. These issues include the following that are elaborated in the BPOA, recognizing that their listing here is not intended to be exhaustive and that many of the constraining factors and challenges remain unchanged since 1994.

a) Delegates strongly reaffirmed their deep concern in regard to the impacts of climate change, climate variability, sea level rise and extreme weather events as an impediment to sustainable development and called on countries that had not done so ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and urged the international community to support implementation of the Regional Framework for Climate Change, Climate Variability and Sea Level Rise.

b) The strengthening of awareness of the BPOA at all levels, noting the difficulties in conducting comprehensive community consultations in the Pacific SIDS, caused by dispersion, vast distances and high transportation costs.

c) It is crucial to have full and effective implementation at the national and regional level of the Pacific Regional Ocean Policy which includes the following five guiding principles: improving our understanding of the ocean; sustainably developing and managing the use of ocean resources, including the promotion and utilization of traditional practices; maintaining the health of the ocean; promoting the peaceful use of the ocean; and creating partnerships and promoting co-operation. It is essential that international support for the Policy be secured.

d) Capacity building for sustainable development in SIDS remains a high priority. This includes capacity issues related to strengthening legal and legislative framework. This requires a support structure at international or regional level, and the need for the development of capacity through the use of regional/national experts for the national/regional training. The expanded use of cooperative arrangements amongst institutions within the region and amongst AOSIS Member States was supported, in order to help bring the regional organizations into a supporting role. This also requires a commitment to improve in-country scientific and technical human resources through training especially at the tertiary level. The importance of capacity building at the national level, including for non-government organizations and community based organizations, was highlighted. The strategic importance of utilizing the CROP organizations and other regional and international organizations as support mechanisms for sustainable development and that "centers of excellence" have been noted as a method for working on this aspect of capacity development.

e) The meeting acknowledged that transport and communication remains important challenges in the promotion and implementation of sustainable development in the region. Programs in support of the provision of transportation services are urgently needed.

f) Mechanisms for access to micro financing for sustainable development in remote areas and the use of other innovative small grants programmes to finance community-based sustainable development initiatives should be developed.

g) The integration of the principles of sustainable development into current planning systems to allow national sustainable development strategies to be properly developed and implemented is at various stages of development in the region. There is a need to determine appropriate tools to actually enable this mainstreaming to be carried out. There is also a continued need to relate the economic instruments of development to the cost of environmental degradation and the costs of repair to the island environment.

h) Delegates expressed the need for accurate and up to date economic, social and environmental data, and recognized the rapidly emerging information tools for national and urban planning, such as geographic information systems (GIS). Delegates called on the international community for support to develop cost-effective and easily accessible tools, such as GIS-based resource information systems at the national and regional levels.

i) Delegates agreed to the need for full and effective implementation of: (i) the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable the Pacific Wastewater Policy Statement and Framework for Action (2001) with key action areas: governance, awareness, infrastructure & information, financing and capacity building; and (ii) Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management (2002), with a clear set of priority actions within a framework of six key areas: water resources management; island vulnerability; awareness, technologies; institutional arrangements and financing. Delegates further recalled the JPOI target to effectively reduce, prevent and control waste and pollution and their health-related impacts by undertaking by 2004 initiatives aimed at implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities in small island developing States. In this regard the active involvement and technical and financial support from the Secretariat of the GPA to SIDS would be required.

j) Waste management with a particular focus on the development of national waste management strategies for the reduction, recycling, reuse and appropriate safe disposal of solid, liquid and hazardous wastes. There is a growing concern in the region in regard to the increase in electronic waste. The restriction of the importation or banning of the use of products that excessively contribute to significant waste problems and health concerns should be considered, and SIDS should be encouraged to become parties to the Rotterdam Convention. A growing concern was the security and environmental implications of the disposal and transport of radioactive materials in and through the region and the lack of liability and compensation regimes.

k) The sustainable use, conservation and management of Pacific biodiversity is a continuing concern. Although most Pacific Island and territories have rich biodiversity inheritances, this ecologically fragile biological inheritance is seriously threatened due to both human impacts and natural events. There are already far too many examples of the illegal access, overexploitation, endangerment and extinction of Pacific Island biological resources, and the loss of associated traditional knowledge. To address this issue it is recommended that the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands (2003-2007) be implemented, and that the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans be completed and implemented, and that the Cartagena Protocol be ratified and implemented. The development of rules to legally protect traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities is needed, noting the ongoing work in the context of the CBD. There is a need for regulatory frameworks or instruments that will ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing to indigenous and local communities whilst providing a fair system of access of investors.

l) Invasive organisms, pests and diseases threaten food and agricultural systems, and critical terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems and environmental servicses. In this regard the regional invasive species strategy should be implemented and further developed to strengthen or develop national invasive species action plans. The international community should be urged to assist the region in the implementation of these strategies and action plans.

m) The meeting acknowledged and respected the customary nature of the control and ownership of land and nearshore marine resources in the region. It encouraged the international community to consider the critical role that customary tenure systems and local land and resources owners have in driving conservation and sustainable development initiatives and the need for their involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring to ensure sustainability.

n) Delegates agreed there is a need to strengthen efforts towards good governance at all levels, noting that at the regional level support is provided to national efforts in political/economic management through the Forum and the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, and through the work of CROP organizations promoting responsible management of human and physical resources including the environment. The meeting also noted that governance needs to expanded to include the notion of economic, social and environmental security. Delegates also noted that security also encompasses food and water security, and the need to address this issue is a matter of urgency.

o) Delegates recognized the special role that women have in the Pacific in ensuring environment and development issues are sustainably harnessed for the continued health and well being of their families and communities. In this regard the meeting urges continued action on the Beijing Platform of Action and the International Conference of Population and Development. Further the meeting recognized embedded gender issues in the MDGs.

23. In addition there are the following recognized new and emerging issues as recognized by the JPOI and by the region:

a) Delegates considered that relative poverty was increasing in some parts of the region and includes the scarcity of opportunity, as described in the Pacific Human Development Report (2003), and also expressed deep concern that abject poverty was increasing especially in urban areas and squatter settlements.

b) The meeting reiterated the regions concern, as reflected in the JPOI, of the increasing incidence of emerging health issues such as HIV/AIDS, drug resistant malarial strains, dengue, nutritional disorders and non-communicable diseases and their impact on sustainable development.

c) Full and effective implementation is needed of the Pacific Islands Regional Information and Communication Technologies Policy (2002) with emphasis on its four guiding principles:
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will be used to inform and connect Pacific Island populations and ensure that they benefit from flexible and appropriate education and training;
- Appropriate ICT infrastructure will be developed to support development for Pacific islands;
- Easy access to information through ICT will strengthen cooperation between stakeholders to ensure good governance, to develop the private sector and to improve service delivery; and
- ICT policies and regulations will facilitate development of the sector and be appropriate to the people and cultures of the Pacific islands.

d) Renewed commitment to find effective ways and means to develop community-based initiatives on sustainable tourism by 2004, and build the capacities necessary to diversify tourism products, while protecting culture and traditions, and effectively conserving and managing natural resources, in particular through community consultations and effective capacity building.

e) Renewed commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Energy Policy (2001) to ensure available, reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound energy for sustainable development for all in the region. Delegates also recognised the importance of finding ways and means to fulfil the agreement in the JPOI on energy for SIDS, and calls on the UN to assist SIDS in developing and implementing national, sub-regional and regional initiatives to this end by 2004, while taking into account the need for financial and technical resources from the GEF, bilateral and multilateral sources, or through other

innovative financial mechanisms, welcoming and strongly support the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition of which AOSIS was a founding member.

f) The meeting was concerned over the accelerating breakdown of the diverse agricultural and food systems that have been a foundation for sustainability, food security and nutritional wellbeing in the Pacific Islands for millennia. It was particularly concerned over increasing dependency on imported food, fuel, medicines and other products and the related increase in nutrition-related ill-health. The meeting strongly urged that future FAO, the SPC Food Security initiative, the SPB Forests and Trees Program and all other relevant food and agriculture initiatives include components that attempt to build on and enhance these time-tested systems, rather than replacing or degrading them with monocultural systems and imported foods.

g) The meeting highlighted the need for flexibility on how international projects and programmes are implemented at the national, sub-national and local levels.

h) The delegates noted the potential environmental and social effects of trading regimes, while also noting the importance of trade to the sustainable development of SIDS, as were the difficulties encountered by SIDS in interactions with the WTO. It is recognized that these issues will continue, and that further elaboration will be required, especially in light of developments at the Cancun meeting. Furthermore, concerted action will be required to address the effects of trading regimes on SIDS.

g) The meeting recognized the key role played by youth in promoting a sustainable development future for the region, and noted the importance of encouraging youth to contribute to the decision making process for sustainable development. It reiterated the commitment in the JPOI, which calls for the promotion and support of youth participation through, for example, supporting local youth councils or their equivalent, and by encouraging their establishment where they do not exist. In this regard the meeting welcomed the voluntary work of the Pacific Youth Environmental Network and encourages the strengthening of that voluntary mechanism.

24. The meeting requested the Government of Samoa, as Chair of the meeting, to ensure that this report be circulated as an official UN document under the preparatory process for the International Meeting.

TEMPLATE FOR PACIFIC REGIONAL POSITION FOR BPOA+10

Pacific Islands

1. SOCIO ECONOMIC CONTEXT: Key characteristics, challenges and responses. • ***Key Characteristics:*** - **Key Challenges:** • ***Key Responses:***
2. NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SD) IN THE REGION
3. PROGRESS MADE & PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BPOA: Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Areas
3.1 SECTORAL AREAS: Progress Made and Problems Encountered
3.1.1 Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise
3.1.2 Natural and Environmental Disasters
3.1.3 Management of wastes **3.1.4 Coastal and Marine Resources** **3.1.5 Freshwater resources**
3.1.6 Land Resources
3.1.7 Energy resources
3.1.8 Tourism resources
3.1.9 Biodiversity resources
3.1.10 National institutions and administrative capacity **3.1.11 Regional institutions and technical cooperation** **3.1.12 Transport and communication** **3.1.13 Science and technology** **3.1.14 Human resource development** **3.1.15 Implementation, monitoring and review**
3.2 CROSS-SECTORAL AREAS
3.2.1 Financing and Investment for SD
3.2.2 Capacity building and Coordination

4. TRADE, INVESTMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND COOPERATION AND THE STATUS OF SIDS VULNERABILITY
5. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG's) AND SD IN SIDS.
5.1 Poverty Eradication
5.2 Education and reduction of child mortality
5.3 Gender equality and empowerment of women
5.4 HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
5.5 Environmental Sustainability
5.6 Global Partnership for Development
6. EMERGING CONCERNS AND SPECIAL NEEDS